

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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REPORT

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twelve
an eleven-page report on

the October rebellion and the November sequel in Budapest. The information is generally known, but is interesting as a summary of events. It contains word on an alleged telephone call made by General Maleter after his arrest by the Soviets (page 8), and on the part played in the rebellion by students from other Communist countries (page 11).

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HUNGARYPOLITICALA Hungarian impression of the uprising in BUDAPEST.

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[redacted] the following description of events in BUDAPEST during the uprising of October and November 1956.

[redacted]

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2. On 22 October 1956 [redacted] a mass meeting held at the polytechnic school in BUDAPEST. Not only large numbers of students but also workers' delegations from the suburbs were present, although no representative of the peasants or small-holders took part. The meeting was presided over by an army colonel named MARJAY. This man was not there as representative of the Hungarian Army, but as the officer commanding the para-military organization to which students at the university had to belong. A small committee of students, either elected or appointed by acclamation, was formed and a fourteen-point programme was drawn up by them, comprising the agreed demands for reform. Already the atmosphere was charged with the spirit of revolution, and during the course of the evening various Hungarian patriotic songs and, more significantly perhaps, the Marseillaise were sung by the assembly. It was decided that a mass demonstration should be held the next day starting at 14.00 hrs. Not only students, but workers and, if possible, peasants were invited to take part.

3. On the morning of 23 October an atmosphere of suppressed excitement prevailed among the students, who eagerly read an enthusiastic account of the previous day's proceedings in the official student newspaper SZABAD IFJUSAG which, although communist controlled, supported the students and workers' demands to the full. No other newspaper in BUDAPEST mentioned the meeting, an omission which was received with angry comment.

4. Between 10.00 and 14.00 hr. on 23 October the students and workers gathered at the appointed assembly points. Everywhere could be heard shouts of "long live freedom", "long live Hungary", and "down with the Russians".

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25X1

- 2 -

There was [redacted] absolutely no organization (in the sense that similar communist demonstrations would have been "organized"), only an overwhelming conviction shared by all that the time had come to change a situation which had become intolerable. Psalms were sung by some groups, the national anthem by others: patriotic poems were recited. National colours had been bought in the shops during the morning and had appeared in everyone's lapels as if by magic. [redacted]

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University professors could be seen stalking along at the head in full academic dress. The ordinary police mingled in the procession with the same enthusiasm as the students themselves: every window was crammed with spectators and many patriotic citizens joined the procession as a sign of sympathy. By the time the PLACE DE BEN had been reached the crowd numbered many thousands. Shouts of "long live GOMULKA!" and "long live our Polish brothers" began to be heard. A uniformed army captain who had joined them declaimed a dedicatory poem to the crowd in the middle of the square. As they moved on towards the Parliament Square the procession passed a barracks, where Hungarian soldiers stood around looking on. The crowd called to them to tear off their Russian-type badges and uniforms like true Hungarians, and all did so without hesitation, officers and men alike.

5. By about 17.00 hr. the procession had reached the square in front of the parliament building. The same scenes of enthusiasm repeated themselves. More and more people thronged into the square, which was soon a densely packed mass of humanity perhaps a hundred thousand or more in number, singing and shouting. The name of NAGY was mentioned repeatedly: already on 22 October, at the time of the first assembly, his name had been on peoples' lips and a university professor had actually headed a small student delegation which called at NAGY's apartment in order to move him to participate; NAGY, who had perhaps been warned by the A.V.H., was not at home. As the crowd stood and waited for a gesture on the part of the government a minister named ERDAI came on to the balcony.

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25X1

- 3 -

On three separate occasions he tried to address the crowd, but utterly failed to make himself heard. Other ministers tried and had no better success. At about 21.00 hrs the lights in the square, which had been lit at dusk, were suddenly switched out. Soon the square was a blaze of light as the crowd lit their newspapers and held them aloft as torches. About this time the crowd swore an oath, their right hands raised, in memory of PETOFI and the insurgents of 1848.

6. Between 21.00 and 21.30 hrs word spread among the crowd that GERO, in a speech, had condemned the manifestation as a fascist demonstration. This news was brought by motorists to the edge of the crowd, which was moved by anger and indignation at GERO's intransigence.

7. It was while these events were taking place in front of the parliament that another crowd, said to have been some 150,000 strong, were destroying the statue of STALIN in the square bearing his name.

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8. NAGY now came to the balcony of the parliament and addressed the crowd. Signs of restlessness were becoming apparent because of reports that A.V.H. men, who had hitherto been conspicuous by their absence, were appearing in strength in the streets. Suddenly, shouts were heard of "to the radio building", and spontaneously the crowd started to move in that direction.

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a garrison of some 600 A.V.H. men had arrived during the course of the evening and GERO himself, who had broadcast from there, left the building only a few minutes before the arrival of the crowd.

9. By about 22.00 hrs the crowd had gathered in strength outside the radio building. The A.V.H. threw tear bombs among them. Some of these bombs were picked up and thrown back inside the building. Next, a delegation of some four or five men went forward to demand that the fourteen-point programme of reform should be broadcast forthwith. A few minutes later their dead bodies were flung out of the upper windows by the A.V.H. Almost immediately afterwards the doors of the building were flung open and a file of A.V.H. men with fixed bayonets

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/advanced.....

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- 4 -

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advanced towards the crowd. Suddenly, apparently without warning, they started to fire point-blank. [redacted] between 20 and 30 men and women were killed on this occasion. As if by magic, the streets in front of the building emptied and the crowd took shelter in the BOULEVARD DU MUSEUM and the neighbouring gardens. Barricades of tramcars were formed.

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[redacted]
a man [redacted] was suddenly shot down, but no-one could see from where. [redacted] the A.V.H. men had probably been stationed in other vantage points near the radio building and were now sniping at the crowd, where they could hardly fail to hit someone.

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10. About 22.30 hrs nine small Hungarian army tanks arrived at the top of the boulevard. [redacted] the colonel or major in charge tell the crowd that "he had been sent by the regime because the A.V.H. had fired without permission". This officer then walked towards the radio building and [redacted] saw him shot down by the A.V.H. as he reached the entrance. The Hungarian soldiers immediately opened fire with small-arms on the radio building. They had no shells for the guns mounted in their tanks. During a brief exchange of fire some 15 or 20 so soldiers were shot down by the A.V.H. : some of them then ran back to call up reinforcements from a neighbouring barracks, the rest joined the crowd. Bystanders seized the arms dropped by the dead ^{soldiers} and continued firing.

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11. At about 23.00 hrs several [redacted] drove up with arms and ammunition which [redacted] had been seized by the workers of CZEDEL, who were said to have occupied an arms factory. Army reinforcements from the PILISZ barracks now started to arrive. Arms were distributed, and steady firing continued throughout the night. It was during the night of 23/24 October that a report spread that the A.V.H. were using Red Cross vans to carry arms and ammunition to the radio building. [redacted] saw one such van stopped and searched. It contained ammunition boxes, but no arms.

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12. At about 05.00 hr. on 24 October a number of Soviet army tanks drove up and halted in the vicinity, in a good tactical position where they could fire down the BOULEVARD DU MUSEUM and another broad street. They made no attempt to interfere, but merely prepared themselves for trouble.

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- 5 -

By about 09.00 hrs [redacted] there were about eighty Soviet tanks standing by [redacted] At about 10.00 hrs A.V.H. resistance in the radio building ceased: only some ten survivors of the original garrison were captured and they were at once hanged by the crowd on near-by trees.

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13. It was about this time that the Russians suddenly opened fire.

[redacted] someone, either an A.V.H. man or a patriot in the crowd, fired at the Russians [redacted]

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The Russians at once fired a couple of shells from their tank guns and almost simultaneously started to machine-gun every living target within sight. [redacted] there seemed to be blood everywhere. Men, women and even children lay dead and wounded in the streets. [redacted]

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By about 13.00 hr. [redacted] everything seemed quiet [redacted]

Confused

shooting continued in different parts of the town, but the streets were deserted.

14. On the morning of 25 October [redacted]

[redacted] the PLACE CALVIN. [redacted] full of Soviet tanks. The Russians were talking casually to members of the crowd and clearly seemed at a loss what to make of it all. No arms were to be seen among the crowd, but the streets were again full of people. It was on this occasion [redacted] saw the only example of fraternization between Soviet troops and Hungarian patriots, when a group of Soviet tankmen embraced a number of students. Later at the corner of RUE RAKOSI and the BOULEVARD DU MUSEUM [redacted] students clamber on to four or five Soviet tanks, which then set off towards parliament square. These tanks carried Hungarian national flags prominently displayed. There were other Soviet tanks in the vicinity, but these made no attempt to interfere. On approaching the parliament square [redacted] the tanks suddenly change direction and depart down a side street, the students falling off or jumping down. These tanks

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/disappeared....

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- 6 -

disappeared, but [] saw two or three others nearby. At about 10.45 hrs
[] the square, [] was crowded with people. []

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Suddenly, about 11.00 hrs the A.V.H. opened fire without warning on the crowd, which was now densely packed. [] estimated that between 500 and 600 people were shot down on this occasion. A period of confusion followed, in which the Soviet tanks - two or three in number at first, later reinforced by another four - started to fire not on the crowd but on the A.V.H. [] a Russian officer had been killed by a shot fired by the A.V.H. During the firing [] saw a line of workers, twenty or thirty in number, walk forward with arms linked towards the A.V.H. machine guns, shouting that they preferred to die rather than live as slaves. Gradually the firing petered out in this area, and the A.V.H. withdrew as best they could.

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15. During the afternoon of the 25th various bookshops were sacked and students made bonfires of communist literature and Soviet propaganda. []

[] the morale of the crowd at this time was exemplary, and [] absolutely no looting of any other goods. [] the feeling of the insurgents remained one of patriotic exultation. Everyone had a firm determination not to sully the revolution by acts of pillage or violence.

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16. During the night of 25/26 October, however, the picture changed once more. Everywhere fighting broke out between the insurgents on the one side and the Soviet troops and A.V.H. on the other. The Russians very rarely left the shelter of their tanks: generally they remained quiet until they were attacked. When attacked they reacted violently by opening fire in all directions at anything that moved. [] saw a woman who had been killed in this way while sitting in her room. This phase lasted from the 25/28 October. []

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[] during this period rumour and hearsay flourished. [] of the 8th and 9th districts and centre of BUDAPEST. Here the main streets were the scene of constant partisan warfare, while the side streets were mainly in the hands of the insurgents.

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[]/The Hungarian army.....

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- 7 -

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The Hungarian army officer MILETTER was already exerting some control over operations, but [] no Hungarian army units fighting in the streets: individual officers and men were certainly fighting alongside the insurgents, but it was generally believed that the army itself was fighting in the open country near the city. The prisons, too, had been opened by this time, and the released prisoners had joined the rebels. Control of each group passed spontaneously to anyone who gave signs of leadership and strength of character: often it was an army officer who best fulfilled this role, but this did not imply that the army was in control of the uprising. On 26 and 27 / October revolutionary councils began to be formed. The workers and students each had their own councils and this, too, was spontaneous. Gradually signs of organization became apparent. For example, blood donors were sought out and sent to the hospitals. []

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[] it was generally reckoned by the insurgent leaders that the Soviet tanks in BUDAPEST at this time numbered about 400. It was on the night of 28/29 October that they started to withdraw from the city to a distance between 20 and 30 km, leaving the surviving A.V.H. units to fight it out with the insurgents. Gradually during the next day or two the A.V.H. were killed off: it was impossible to save any of them who fell into the hands of the insurgents. Many were literally torn to pieces, others shot, others hanged by the feet and kicked to death mercilessly by the crowd. [] saw one dressed as a [] driver chased and killed by the crowd. He had apparently followed the driver into a house, shot him, taken his uniform, and had been discovered just as he was about to leave the house. Others were found to be dressed in Soviet or Hungarian army uniforms: but the crowd seemed to have a sixth sense in picking them out.

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17. Meanwhile councils and political groups sprang up like mushrooms. University students, workers, churchmen, actors, writers, all started to organize themselves into small groups. On 29 October their representatives met NAGY. It was agreed to form a national militia to keep order in the streets and to send out envoys to other towns and universities in Hungary. [] arms were issued to selected students and workers and a rigorous control of identity cards was established.

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/One object was.....

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- 8 -

One object was to track down the remaining A.V.H. men: one way in which this was done was to examine the glue behind the photographs on identity cards. If it was new the bearer became the object of suspicion. This was because the A.V.H. were known to have large stocks of false identity cards at their disposal. By gumming on their photographs they could pass themselves off as businessmen, workers, students or what they wished.

18. In this way order was gradually restored and by 4 November the town was running quietly and well. The person mainly responsible for this was the police chief Alexander KOPACSI. The main problem was one of co-ordination. Four or five "national committees" and fifteen or more "revolution committees" had been formed in various parts of BUDAPEST and the leading figures often failed to see eye to eye. For example DUDAS, the leader of the national committee formed in the 8th district had frequent disputes with MALETER. DUDAS was a strong, energetic, passionate man, who did not think clearly, but acted strongly.

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19. On 31 October [redacted] heard that Soviet troops were crossing into Hungary from the east: by 2 November they were known to have reached the vicinity of the Austrian frontier, and to be seizing road and rail crossings, railway stations, and strategic points.

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20. In connexion with MALETER's arrest on 3 November

[redacted] asked if he was under arrest, MALETER replied that he was still a prisoner, but had the right of making telephone calls

/and speaking.....

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and speaking to his colleagues. [REDACTED]

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21. Meanwhile the fighting in BUDAPEST had started again between 04.00 and 05.00 hrs on 4 November, when Soviet artillery started to shell the city. Partisan warfare flared up once more. This time the fighting was more bitter. Not only were there more Russians, including infantry as well as armour, but the insurgents themselves were more organized. For example, their food and ammunition was now brought up regularly by messengers at night. Food was plentiful, although the peasants were no longer able to drive [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] agricultural produce "for the freedom fighters of BUDAPEST" as they had done during the few days after the first Russian withdrawal. In general, the characteristic of the fighting was that, as before, the insurgents held the sidestreets and the cellars, while Russians held the main street and rarely ventured off them. Hungarian aircraft occasionally dropped pamphlets and bombs on the Russians, but [REDACTED] saw no Hungarian army units fighting in the city - only a few individual soldiers who continued the struggle as partisans. [REDACTED] the lack of trained soldiers was a pity because in the 11th district [REDACTED] saw an anti-tank gun and ammunition standing disused because the insurgents did not know how to fire it.

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22. As an example of rebel tactics against the Russian troops, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] on 5 November in PLACE MORICZ ZSIGMOND [REDACTED] an ambush was laid for the Russians. The rebels stationed themselves in the houses round the square in the main street leading towards it. Some of the occupants of the houses protested, saying that they would all be shot if the Russians found any insurgents there. Their protests were, however, ignored. Shortly afterwards a number [REDACTED] drove down the street, carrying about 150 Soviet infantrymen. The rebels opened fire and within a few moments had killed about sixty Russians and wounded many others. A few escaped, while the rebels carried the wounded Russians down into the cellars. A small column of Soviet tanks was then seen to halt further down the street and fire white rockets. A few minutes later they fired red rockets, and Soviet artillery then opened fire on the square, causing much damage and starting fires.

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/ The tanks moved.....

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The tanks moved up when the firing ceased. Not long after [redacted] heard the Russians call for help in putting out one of the fires. [redacted] saw five of the insurgents brought out of a cellar at gun-point, ostensibly to help extinguish the flames. In fact they were immediately shot down by the Russians and two of them, still living, were thrown into the flames.

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23. [redacted] at PLACE SZENA [redacted]
[redacted] an insurgent anti-tank gun crew stationed there had destroyed some twenty Soviet tanks before being put out of action.

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24. In this connexion [redacted] had seen no Soviet deserters fighting alongside the insurgents and, apart from the incident on 25 October [redacted] saw no evidence of Russian sympathy with the insurgents, although [redacted] heard of what were probably other isolated cases of this happening.

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25. The 11th and 12th districts were occupied by the Russians within about four days, but fighting continued elsewhere in the city, after 8 November, particularly in the working-class suburbs. Fighting also went on in and around the old BUD fortress and until 12 or 13 November. Here the insurgents poured oil on the steep streets, making it extremely difficult for Soviet tanks to climb up the hill into the fortress. Fighting went on even longer in the suburbs. Everywhere there was firing at night: the Russians seemed to be afraid of shadows.

26. [redacted] after about 10 November arrests and deportations were being made by the Russians. [redacted] the number of young people actually seized was about 10,000,

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[redacted]
At the same time the deportations were not thorough or systematic. "If you hid you were all right" - the Russians were obviously scared to venture into houses or cellars and avoided doing so. Russian behaviour to their prisoners was mixed: some were shot, some were released and sent home.

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/One well-authenticated....

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One well-authenticated case of shooting was at the University where 18 or 20 students were found shot in the head. Those who threw away their arms and returned home were generally safe from interference if they kept quiet.

27. During the second and third week of November the A.V.H. began to reappear and, to maintain public order, a special police battalion was formed consisting of army officers who were prepared to swear an oath of loyalty to the KADAR regime. On 17 November the chief of police of the 11th district, [redacted]

[redacted] remarked [redacted] that the new chief of police in the CZEPEL district was an A.V.H. man in police uniform. Gradually the remaining rebel strongpoints were wiped out: flame-throwers and tear-gas was used by the Russians to clear some cellars. The barracks which had served as MALETER's headquarters was the scene of desperate resistance on the part of the labour battalions (consisting of soldiers of "bourgeois" or "Kulak" background who served as auxiliary workmen rather than as soldiers during their military service, and knew that they now had nothing to live for).

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28. [redacted] no looting began until 4 or 5 November, when Russians began to break into shops and steal whatever they could lay their hands on. The Hungarians then followed suit, knowing that what they did not take, the Russians would. In general the Russians did not break into occupied houses and there were very few cases of rape.

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With regard to looting, [redacted] a Russian officer and four men encouraged a group of Hungarians to break into a warehouse to steal flour, and then took photographs of them doing so, presumably for propaganda.

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29. With regard to casualties, [redacted] among themselves, the insurgents calculated that between 60 and 70 thousand inhabitants of BUDAPEST died during the rising. Certainly all the hospitals were crammed with wounded, and it was said that about 100 thousand persons actually received treatment for wounds (possibly many of the walking wounded were counted several times over). The insurgents themselves believed that they had killed between 10 and 15 thousand Russians.

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/The insurgents...

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- 11 -

The insurgents reckoned their fighting potential to lie somewhere between 80 and 100 thousand, out of the 2 million inhabitants of BUDAPEST.

30. Perhaps a small pointer to the whole picture is the example of the theological academy. All fifty-five students took part in the demonstrations on 23 November and in the subsequent fighting, mainly as non-combatant stretcher-bearers and medical attendants. Now there are only forty still at the academy: two were killed and thirteen are refugees in Western Europe.

31. Looking back on these events [] while the most diverse elements fought in the ranks of the insurgents, including HORTHY officers and gypsies alike, perhaps the most encouraging thing [] was the way in which communist students from other Sino-Soviet bloc countries identified themselves with the cause of their Hungarian comrades. []

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[] several North Korean students [] seen fighting alongside the Hungarian insurgents.

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